

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2006

WESTERN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

400 PHENIX AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION: 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at Western Hills Middle School with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Palumbo, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Nero, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mr. Laliberte, and Mrs. Lundsten.

The meeting was called to order at 6:18 p.m. It was moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel, PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation, and PL 42-46-5((8)(b) Privacy of Students and Their Records. Pursuant to RI State Law 42-46-598)(b), the effected parties have been so notified in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held in an open meeting. They have chosen Executive Session for this hearing.

Mr. Lupino, acting Chair, reconvened the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

The roll was called, and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

Mr. Lupino reported out that the committee voted unanimously in Executive Session to uphold administration's decision to deny Kindergarten entrance to the children in question.

I. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – December 18, 2006

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Mr. Archetto and unanimously carried that the December 18, 2006 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.

II. Minutes of Previous Meetings Approved – November 15, 2006; November 20, 2006

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the minutes of the November 15, 2006 and November 20, 2006 meetings be approved.

III. Public Acknowledgements / Communications

Mr. Lupino stated that he had the good fortune to attend the Cranston High School West presentation of Grease the weekend before last. While they did a professional job, he was delighted to be able to make a connection between Cranston West and the elementary schools. Through some efforts, ½ of the fifth graders in the elementary schools saw a portion of that play. It was a wonderful experience for both sides. He hoped that the new School Committee will support programs such as this.

IV. Chairperson Communications

There were none at this time.

V. Superintendent Communications

Mr. Scherza referred to Resolution No. 06-12-8 for the purchase of three defibrillators for the school district. He noted that Councilman Jeffrey Barone raised money from local businesses and individuals and donated it. The purchase price comes to an aggregate of approximately \$4,200. The remaining approximately \$800 will be used to purchase peripherals such as additional paddles, battery chargers, etc. He thanked Mr. Barone for his generous gift and his consistent work in generating funds for this. This is not the first group of defibrillators that he has sponsored.

Mr. Scherza stated that tonight's meeting marks the last night of the currently seated School Committee as a group. In January two new members will be added, Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and Mr. Lombardi. A number of colleagues have worked hard together; sometimes they have agreed, and sometimes they haven't. He knows that all seven people consistently worked for the best interest of the students of the Cranston Public Schools. He knows what these people have dedicated to the community. Unlike any other elected position, there is no remuneration and no benefits. They get a lot of abuse and make a lot of tough decisions. He could not say how much they are respected and valued. He told them that they would be missed.

Mr. Scherza acknowledged Mr. Gordon Palumbo who is leaving the committee. He is the Chairperson. Mr. Scherza presented Mr. Palumbo with a gavel for his tenure as Chairman of the Cranston School Committee and a clock as a member of the committee. Mr. Palumbo thanked all the people he worked with and was sorry that he couldn't continue. Mr. Lupino stepped up and did a great job. He will miss all the fine people he worked with.

Mr. Scherza stated that two years ago Mr. Lupino was voted in as the Clerk of the Cranston School Committee. In that capacity, he has done more than yeoman's work. During some difficult times, he has stepped up and carried the ball. He has led this School Committee and school district. On behalf of everyone in Cranston, Mr. Scherza

presented him with a clock. As the acting Chairperson, Mr. Scherza presented him with a gavel in recognition of his service.

Mr. Lupino stated that he would miss this position. It has been a tough eight years. The committee has gone through quite a bit. He regrets that he didn't get to spend more time with Mr. Palumbo. He has been an inspiration to him. They didn't always agree, but he has calmed him down when a motion got the best of him. They have gotten through some emotional times together. He commented that he will miss the kids the most – the graduations, the honors programs. He still goes to the hockey games. The graduations were especially touching. He commented further that he couldn't have done it without a lot of people through the years. The present School Committee has been wonderful. They have had their ups and downs. He was brought up a Catholic and said the Lord's Prayer every day of his life, and per his faith, he forgives those who have trespassed against him so he forgives those who have trespassed against him in some of their discussions. Mr. Traficante, in particular, has been an inspiration. Mrs. Greifer has been what truly a School Committee member should be. She does everything for the kids, and he will miss the both of them. Mr. Scherza has made a wonderful transition from Mrs. Ciarlo and that entire group. He couldn't have done what he did without some special people. He thanked his family. He gave

up time with his son in order to do this, but they made up for it. He thanked his wife, Marie. Anyone who knows his wife, her feet hit the ground running at 5:30 a.m. He thanked her and told her he loved her very much. He thanked all of the people he has met. He hoped this committee is able to persevere through the tough times that are coming. Mr. Traficante was made aware of some drastic news the other night, and it doesn't bode well for a good financial outlook for this district or any district in Rhode Island. He told the administrators earlier that the district needs to get together and go to the Rhode Island Department of Education. They do not support education at a grass roots level. They do not support education other than from a philosophical level. The district needs to get more out of them. They are under-used and directing the district in a way that is taking away from where it should be.

Mr. Traficante commented that he has been in politics since 1979 in Cranston, and he could say that in that twenty-eight year period of time that he worked the last two years with two of the finest gentlemen that he has had the pleasure of being with in political office. Both Mr. Lupino and Mr. Palumbo have had the City of Cranston foremost in their thoughts, on their lips, and certainly in their hearts during their political tenure on the Cranston School Committee. The School Committee feels the same way, and they wish nothing but the greatest of health for Gordon Palumbo and wish Tony Lupino much success as he continues his political career on the City Council. He told Mr. Lupino that the committee is counting

on him to carry the banner for the Cranston Public Schools as a member of the Cranston City Council. He wished them well and told them God bless them both.

Page 4 December 18, 2006

Mr. Scherza wished everyone - the School Committee, the people who follow the School Committee, the Administrators and all in this great community – a Happy Holiday Season. He hoped it would be a safe one especially for the students. He pointed out that many people make sacrifices. The men and women overseas make sacrifices, but nothing can be greater than the sacrifice of a mom who gives her son.

Mr. Scherza acknowledged Mrs. Deborah Greifer whose son is arriving home from Baghdad later this evening.

VI. School Committee Member Communications

Mrs. Greifer added her thoughts to those of Mr. Traficante. It has been a pleasure working with both Mr. Palumbo and Mr. Lupino. They will be missed. She wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season.

Mrs. Greifer referred to Resolution No. 06-12-7 which is on the consent agenda and mentioned that the grant applications this month total \$2,433,648.

Mr. Stycos mentioned that a couple of weeks ago the principal at Cranston East had a faculty meeting. He was not present at the meeting and was not pretending that he knew what happened. After the meeting, he talked with several teachers and parents who came out of that meeting with the belief that starting in September 2008 the schools would have two tracks in high school, an honors track and a combined college prep/comprehensive track, and that the School Committee had already made that decision. It was a done deal. On Wednesday, he talked with Mr. Scherza about this. He would like to get it aired out at this meeting. Those were not his impressions of what is going on.

Mr. Scherza stated that he didn't think it was ever portrayed that it is a done deal because administration doesn't know what track the high school reform is taking as a district. He does know, however, that the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education has promulgated a high school reform initiative and a middle school reform initiative. Among the pieces in there is the leveling of courses in a way that de-tracks students rather than putting students into multiple different tracks. No one knows at this point what form it will take, and it remains to be seen. It is an initiative that will take faculty participation and a year of planning. That is why the Department of Education stipulates that it has to be ready for September 2008 which is a year from next September.

Mr. Stycos summarized by stating that the district has to make some changes because of state requirements. Eliminating tracking is one option but the district doesn't have to eliminate tracking, and there hasn't been a School Committee decision. Mr. Scherza responded that there hasn't been a School Committee discussion let alone a decision.

Page 5 December 18, 2006

He asked Mr. Laliberte or Mrs. Lundsten to add any comments. He further commented that the whole intent is to be in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, and the district has to get it in place and have it approved by RIDE before moving forward. It would take a discussion and vote of this committee before it can move forward.

Mr. Laliberte explained that administration has re-defined the courses that are offered, and they have changed not only the descriptions of the courses but they want to ensure that all courses being offered at least will bring the students up to meeting the grade span expectations so that they can pass the State Assessment. That was not necessarily true in the more traditional program of college prep and comprehensive. They are actually upping the comprehensive courses to make sure that those students are able to pass the State Assessment. That is as far as administration has gotten so far.

Mr. Stycos stated that in talking with someone at the State Department of Education, it was his understanding that this is something that definitely needs to be done. There were these expectations that the courses had to move the students toward those expectations on an understandable progression, so the district couldn't have sports math unless it fit into a pattern of courses that would get students to a state set goal.

Mr. Lupino stated that what the state proposes goes in direct conflict with what the teachers in the field are experiencing. The lower track students will be brought up to the middle at the expense of the higher track students because they will all be in one group. It will go back to teaching to the middle again.

Mr. Traficante reported that he and Mrs. Greifer have completed their work on the Facility Use Committee. A draft policy will be submitted to all committee members at the next work session for their perusal. They feel they did a somewhat comprehensive job, but they certainly welcome all suggestions and recommendations to improve upon that policy.

Mr. Lupino asked if they anticipate bringing in any more revenues into the district because the committee level funded the athletic revenues at \$29,000 for the last eight years and for the next five years out. Mr. Traficante responded that they added a second layer to the facility use fees, not only custodial but also a facility use fee itself; it

is a combination of the two which most school departments adhere to. Hopefully it will bring in some revenue to assist the district.

Mr. Lupino reported that he had the opportunity to attend the girls' ice hockey coop team's first at-home game Friday evening. They lost the game, but it was enjoyable to watch. They wanted to come to this meeting this evening, but they had their injury fund game. They wanted to thank the committee, particularly Mr. Traficante and Mr. Lupino,

Page 6 December 18, 2006

for pushing forward in trying to get that team going. They are looking forward to good news from them.

Mr. Lupino mentioned earlier that he had the opportunity to see Grease, and during the intermission someone grabbed his arm. This person was extremely vocal during the hearings over the restructuring of Horton School. She introduced herself and said "thank you. I know what you meant when you said that you were not sending our kids to a bad place." She said that she was taking back a lot of what she said during those hearings. She still feels bad about closing Horton School, but she was very pleased about the place her daughter is in right now.

Mr. Palumbo left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

VII. Public Hearing

a. Students (Agenda/Non-agenda Items)

b. Members of the Public (Agenda Matters Only)

Peter Pirolli, Student at Cranston High School West – Peter read a statement as follows: We approach the committee tonight in hopes of change. We speak on behalf of the Cranston West Varsity Hockey Team when we say we feel our team is being treated unjust for reasons that are out of our control. Prior to this season the program was informed that volunteer coaches would not be allowed to be associated with the program in any way. As the captains of the team, seniors, and more importantly student-athletes, we feel that it is our obligation to speak up and give the school committee some insight into the problem as we see it.

The elimination of volunteer coaches creates a number of problems when it comes to the development and success of a high school varsity team. To make our first and most obvious concern clear we start off by emphasizing that a varsity hockey team can consist up to and/or exceed 20 players during any given game-time or practice situation. Having only two coaches to run practice, games, and off ice activities is not adequate or practical when the issues of safety and maintenance come into play.

We, as student athletes who only play hockey, view other Cranston sports teams in amazement when we take a look at the sidelines only to find several volunteer coaches helping the players out and participating in the success of that program. After seeing it with more than one sport we can't help but feel like we are getting shortchanged and treated unjust. It is not only a matter of equality and fairness but also safety to our teammates and us.

Hockey is an intense game in which hitting is not only legal, but a huge aspect of the game. If a player gets injured in a league game or during practice and has to be

Page 7 December 18, 2006

escorted off the ice by one or more coaches that need to aide in his well-being or initial condition then that means, at most, our team will only have one coach for the supervision of 20 players and after our first two league games we can easily say that leaving any one coach to completely supervise and manage a full bench is a very challenging task for the coach and the players. Like any other team sport, we as student athletes rely on coaches to not only organize and direct the players on the bench and on the ice but also to offer us guidance and support during the game.

Besides the important issue of our safety, we also urge the committee to view the situation through our eyes. For the seniors, it is the last

opportunity to win a state championship and we feel, along with the underclassmen that have committed to the team, that we can only accomplish our goal under proper instruction and understanding of the game. It is our consensus that in addition to our two current coaches a few volunteer coaches who also have a clear knowledge of the game would be very helpful during practice and games. For example we could simply and successfully be able to run separate offensive and defensive drills and strategies with more focus due to a more personalized coaching approach. The addition of more volunteer coaches would also benefit the Junior Varsity Program giving that team one to two more coaches on the bench as it currently has only one, again jeopardizing the safety and possible success of the players.

We are not asking for much. We want a fair chance and we want equality. The decision to eliminate volunteer coaches strictly from the Cranston West Hockey Program is one that takes away from us as student-athletes. We are no different from the other sports teams in our school, so the committee should have no problem listening to our concerns and seeing the problems as we see them.

Thank you for your time and attention. We also have a signed petition with many names.

There were no members of the public wishing to speak on an Agenda item.

VIII. Consent Calendar / Consent Agenda

ADMINISTRATION

PERSONNEL

NO. 06-12-1 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individuals be reappointed as athletic coaches:

BAIN

Robert Manning Boys' Head Basketball

Nelson Rico Coed Head Wrestling

Page 8 December 18, 2006

PARK VIEW

Lloyd Bochner Girls' Head Basketball

John Macera Boys' Head Basketball

WESTERN HILLS

Victor Caldarone Coed Head Wrestling

NO. 06-12-2 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following individuals be appointed as athletic coaches:

James Hopgood, Assistant Girls' Hockey, Cranston High School East/Cranston High School West

Step – 3

Class – D

Playing Competition – High School

Experience – Coach Rhode Island Panthers Hockey

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid Certified

Michael Rachiele, Head Girls' Basketball, Western Hills Middle School

Step – 7

Class – D

Playing Competition – High School

Experience – Cranston High School West Junior Varsity

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid Certified

Joseph Splendorio, Head Boys' Basketball, Western Hills Middle School

Step – 7

Class – D

Playing Competition – Johnston High School

Experience – Cranston High School East Freshman

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid Certified

Michele Dunphy, Head Girls' Basketball, Bain Middle School

Step – 4

Class – D

Playing Experience – Cranston High School East

Experience – Two Years Recreational Level

**Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid
Certified**

Page 9 December 18, 2006

Kevin Ascoli, Head Boys' Wrestling, Park View Middle School

Step – 6

Class – D

Playing Experience – High School and College

Experience – Ten Years Middle/High School

**Certification - Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED/First Aid
Certified**

Walter Brown, Assistant Girls' Basketball

Cranston High School East

Step – 7

Class – C

Playing Competition – None

Experience – Coach Bain Girls' Basketball

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED Certified

Peter Zanfagna, Head Freshman Boys' Basketball

Cranston High School East

Step – 1

Class – D

Playing Competition – High School

Experience – Bishop Hendricken Summer League

Certification – Rhode Island Coaches Certification; CPR/AED Certified

NO. 06-12-3 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified employees be appointed:

Linda Gallo, Three-hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment - November 14, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 32647179 511000

Judy Reall, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – November 20, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 33047179 511000

Judith Hafey, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – November 20, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 32647179 511000

Page 10 December 18, 2006

Stella Santiago, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – November 27, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 31347179 511000

Linda Johnson, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – November 27, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 32447179 511000

Deborah Zellar, Teacher Assistant

Meeting Street School

Effective Date of Employment – December 4, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 11332032 519500

Joan Richards, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – December 5, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 3224179 511000

Lynne A. Cyr, Three-Hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date of Employment – December 6, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 31547179 511000

Christopher Martini, Four-hour Custodian

Plant

Effective Date of Employment - December 19, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 11847481 518200

Keith Bernier, Five-hour Custodian

Plant

Effective Date of Employment – December 19, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 11647481 518200

Susan Gravel, Secretary

Alternate Education Program

Effective Date of Employment – December 18, 2006

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 16278715 515100

Sharon Piscitelli, Grants Manager

Business Office

Effective Date of Employment – January 2, 2007

Authorization – Replacement

Fiscal Note: 19643151 511100

NO. 06-12-4 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified personnel be appointed as a substitute on a temporary basis as needed:

SECRETARY

Christine Baccari

NO. 06-12-5 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following non-certified staff member be granted a leave of absence without compensation as provided in Article X, Section D of the Master Agreement between the Cranston School Committee and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance:

Carolyn Taylor, Teacher Assistant

Effective Dates: December 2006 to September 2007

NO. 06-12-6 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the resignations of the following non-certified personnel be accepted:

Nancy Thibault, Three-hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date: November 24, 2006

Mayra Marin, Three-hour Food Service Worker

Food Service

Effective Date: November 3, 2006

David Cimaglio, Custodian

Bain Middle School

Effective Date: December 18, 2006

Page 12 December 18, 2006

Joanne Woerner, School Based Coordinator

Cranston Area Career & Technical Center

Effective Date: December 4, 2006

GRANTS

NO. 06-12-7 - RESOLVED, that the Cranston Public Schools submit the following grants:

Rhode Island Department of Education

Partnerships and Research Investigations with \$2,431,148

Mathematicians, Engineers, and Scientists (PRIMES)

Rhode Island State Legislature (Representative Peter Palumbo)

Garden City School – purchase two computers \$ 2,500

BUSINESS

NO. 06-12-8 - RESOLVED, that the following purchases be approved:

Defibrillators (3) in the amount of \$4,286.85. (Provided through fundraising by Cranston City Councilman Jeffrey Barone)

Number of bids issued 8

Number of bids received 4

**NO. 06-12-9 - RESOLVED, that the following purchases be approved:
(Fund 3)**

Cafeteria Food and Supplies for the Cranston School Lunch Program for the period of January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007 be purchased in the estimated amount of \$311,286.15.

Number of bids issued 10

Number of bids received 3

NO. 06-12-10 - RESOLVED, that the following purchases be approved: (Perkins Grant)

Platform Hoist in the amount of \$2,124.00

Number of bids issued 5

Number of bids received 1

Page 13 December 18, 2006

POLICY AND PROGRAM

NO. 06-12-11 - RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Superintendent, the following conference be authorized:

Mark Colozzi, Program Supervisor for Music, to travel to Hartford, Connecticut to attend the 50th MENC Eastern Division Biennia Conference from March 7, 2007 to March 11, 2007.

Moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that these Resolutions be adopted.

Mr. Scherza stated that it gave him great pleasure to welcome Mrs. Piscitelli back. She was with the Cranston Public Schools for quite some time, then for personal reasons had a hiatus away. He welcomed her back to the position of Grants and Fiscal Manager. Mr. Scherza added that this is a crucial position that deals with the oversight and compliance of literally millions of dollars each year. From 2005 to the present, Sharon has been at Rhode Island College as a data management specialist. Before that she was with Cranston Public Schools in payroll and MIS systems. She attended the Institute for Labor Studies and has certifications in Access, RIMBA/G.E. She has also been certified as a financial institute loan officer, University Levels I and II. She has also achieved the Capstone Institute of Mortgage Finance in Marietta, Georgia. She brings a great deal of experience that will help in overseeing and maximizing the benefits of grants in these very tough times of financial shortfalls.

IX. Action Calendar / Action Agenda

There was no action agenda.

X. New Business

There was no new business to bring before the committee.

XI. Public Hearing on Non-agenda Items

Adam Lupino, 15 Black Oak Court – He wished to speak in support of the volunteer coaches for the Cranston West hockey program. He stated that he was a player from 1988 to 2002. He was the captain of the team his senior year. There is a necessity for these coaches. They are the ones who make the team run. The head coach makes certain decisions and makes the team run, but from practices to certain situations in the game, these volunteers are needed. They all have extensive background in the game and have all played. They are a true asset. He doesn't know who made the decision, whether it was the committee or administration, but they are truly restricting people from

Page 14 December 18, 2006

volunteering in this community. The lives of sixty high school hockey players throughout the program from JV to varsity are being impacted. They are not doing it for any money or fanfare. They like the game and like to help out. From experience, the Cranston West hockey program is about family and tradition. That is why he came back this evening to talk about it. The coaches were an inspiration to him. He feels that he should be back here helping them out. In order

to have a successful JV program, there can't be one coach coaching twenty high school freshmen and sophomores. It is not safe to have one coach on the ice at one time. The kids lose out on instruction when they move up to the varsity level. When they are running a varsity practice, more than one or two coaches are needed to instruct the goalies, defense or offense. There are some things that a head coach doesn't always see. They need someone running the bench and eyeing the doors to make the major decisions. In the locker rooms during intermission they need to talk to the team about certain aspects. More importantly it is a matter that they are volunteering trying to help out and give back to the community. It is an injustice to stop them from doing that. This program took off around 1996 or 1997. This is a very successful program. They have won three state championships in ten years since 1997. They have dominated the division in which they play. Why stop now? There is a successful influx of talented hockey players who want to stay in Cranston and won't go to other schools. They know the families, coaches, and the tradition. The program took a step back this year because of that; it is really hurting them. As Peter Pirolli mentioned in his speech, they are not asking for much. It would be in the best interest of the committee to help this program out because they have given back so much. It is not a difficult decision; it is a safety issue. In the best interest of the kids, they need these volunteer coaches.

Joseph Sczerbinski, 150 Council Rock Road – Mr. Sczerbinski stated that he planned to say a lot at this meeting, but after listening to these

two young men, he could not have said it any better. The issue is about the student athletes; it is not about other issues that have been discussed at prior meetings with the Superintendent and the committee. What these young men said is exactly what everyone who has talked to members on the committee is trying to tell them. He heard Mr. Scherza say something earlier in recognizing the two people who are leaving this committee. He said that this committee works together in the best interest of the students in the City of Cranston. Taking aside every other issue in the best interest of the students of the City of Cranston, it is unfair and unjust to have these student athletes work under guidelines different from any other student athlete in the City. He hopes there will be some discussion. These two young men are products of what has taken place with this program in the last eight or nine years. These are the types of young men the school district should want representing this City when they leave this school system. It doesn't come just from hockey, but it is a part of why they are the way they are. It is a family, and it is more than just hockey. It is not just going to play a game. There is a lot that goes on before games, after games, and during the week. He was part of it; he played for this team in 1981 and 1982. He has been a citizen of this City his whole life,

Page 15 December 18, 2006

and his wife is a teacher in this system. He came with no children in the program to give back because people gave to him when he was a

student athlete.

Mr. Lupino stated that it would be important to note to the other committee members that Mr. Sczerbinski is one of the assistant coaches, and it would be important for him to state what his personal thoughts are. Mr. Sczerbinski told the committee that he was not appearing before them asking to be allowed to coach. He would love to be able to help these young men, but that is not the reason he came to the meeting tonight. The boys do need help because two coaches are not enough to coach that many athletes. If a decision was made to allow volunteers to help with the program, he would love to offer his time, but that is not the reason why he came to the meeting. There are a lot of things that go on, and more than two people are needed. If there were issues with the current assistant coaches, they would gladly step aside as long as the committee would allow this program the same chance that is afforded to every other program in the City of Cranston. The other school in the city with a hockey team has twelve hockey players, two paid coaches, and two or three unpaid coaches who are on the ice different days of the week helping twelve players. Cranston West had forty players try out for this program, and they have a full varsity team. At any given game, they can dress twenty players. The junior varsity team can dress that same amount. They need someone, and it doesn't need to be them, to help. These students should be allowed the same advantages that every other student in this city is allowed.

Mr. Lupino indicated that a volunteer was used last year who was a former student at Cranston West. He is a student at Rhode Island College. Mr. Sczerbinski commented that this young man played four years on the baseball and hockey teams at Cranston West. He was an all-state player in baseball and all-division in hockey multiple times. He went on to Rhode Island College and was an all-conference pitcher for their baseball team. He is an exceptional student and is now finishing his college education. Last year he volunteered his time to work with the players. Last year was a trying year with the rink burning down. These athletes had to get up every morning and go from town to town to practice at 5:30 in the morning. This young man was there every day offering his services at 5:30. He is very willing to participate and help out, and he is a product of this system. He has gone on and made everyone proud as a college student, and he still wants to give back to where he came from; and he is not being allowed to do it. Mr. Lupino asked if it was true that this person is being recruited by another team in West's division. Mr. Sczerbinski responded that hockey is a very close community, and if one is involved in it, everyone knows everyone else from youth hockey up through high school. This young man has been approached by other high schools outside of Cranston because they know he is not being allowed to give his assistance to this team. He has been approached to go outside the district to volunteer his time. They know what he has to offer and that he would be a positive influence on the players. There are a lot of negatives influences out there for the kids today, and hockey and this group is not one of them. Because there is a

separate issue, it has nothing to do with these

Page 16 December 18, 2006

boys. It is a sad case, and this is not in the best interest of the students. There is an underlying issue, but as committee members, they should be able to separate an issue with the well-being of the student athletes.

Mr. Lupino apologized to any of the parents who thought the sub-committee on coaches was going to address this situation. This was not the purpose of that sub-committee. He did not receive a report. Mr. Traficante commented that the committee met and did form a draft policy for volunteer coaches for all sports. It is a policy that will be brought before the School Committee to look at and make recommendations for approval in the near future. Mr. Lupino asked if there was a parent/lawyer that was involved in that process, and Mr. Traficante said that there was. Mr. Votto, Mr. Scherza, a parent and himself served on this committee. They did not discuss the Cranston West issue. They addressed volunteer coaches in general for the Cranston School Department. He hoped that the policy would be presented to the new School Committee at their first work session. The policy has been drafted and adopted by the sub-committee to move forward to the School Committee. Mr. Stycos asked Mr. Traficante if he felt it would have any impact on this situation with the Cranston West hockey team this year or if it was totally different. Mr.

Traficante responded that it was a difficult question for him to answer because of what took place with union representatives present.

Mr. Sczerbinski stated that with those underlying issues taken aside, no one has answered his question as to why these students are being put in the way of this situation. He asked why they were being held accountable for something they didn't do. If there is an issue that can't be resolved currently, he asked why it would be allowed to go on. He asked why this would go on until next year when some of the boys are graduating and their careers will be over. He knows what the issues are and what the committee can't speak about. As School Committee members, he couldn't understand how they couldn't see through all of that red tape to understand what they are doing to these young men so that everyone could come to an agreement for this season. It has nothing to do with him, the volunteer coaches, or the paid coaches; it is about the players. They came here and spoke because they believe that.

Mr. Lupino stated to Mr. Votto that he was part of a discussion about how this all came about. He asked if this issue was something that is under the perusal of the School Committee that they can act on this or do something about this. Mr. Votto responded that it is a personnel matter. Mr. Lupino commented that it arose out of a personnel issue, and that has been addressed; but they came back and approached it from a different standpoint. They are now presenting it as a safety and fairness issue to the students from a

different standpoint. He asked Mr. Votto if a School Committee can supersede or intervene in an issue that was initially a personnel matter but has other implications. Mr. Votto responded that the decision was made by the Superintendent with input from the Athletic Director and him. The scope is much larger than can be imagined at this particular point. Administration took action as a district, and the action

Page 17 December 18, 2006

impacted the program. It happens in college every day. When something happens to part of the program, it impacts the entire program. If the committee wishes to override a decision made by the Superintendent based upon what they know, then that is the prerogative of the School Committee. Mr. Lupino asked if the coach in question is under any type of gag order to not speak about the issues related to it. Mr. Votto responded that the personnel matter is confidential. It would be confidential if the person is a teacher or isn't a teacher. An incident occurred, and the scope is much broader. The School Committee is much aware of what that scope is, but it would be inappropriate for anyone on this floor in public session to discuss it. Mr. Lupino asked about rectifying the situation that goes above and beyond that. Mr. Votto responded that if the present School Committee or the new School Committee wishes to override the Superintendent's decision, of which he has totally informed all of them, then it is their prerogative to do that. Mr. Lupino asked how a

request to do that arises.

Ms. Iannazzi called for a point of order. She stated that this conversation should not go any further due to possible litigation. Mr. Sczerbinski asked Ms. Iannazzi if she knew the possible litigation the committee could face if a player is injured. He further stated that a varsity practice took place last week in Cranston and a junior varsity practice took place in Burrillville which he attended. An incident happened, and he knows that a lot of background research was not done on this situation. He was told some of the information, and it isn't true. One coach was at the varsity practice on Wednesday, and one coach was at the junior varsity game. His son is a junior varsity player. When one coach is sent to coach a hockey game, he cannot coach the game, run a door for the defensemen to come in, and run a door for forwards to come in. Now the players have to do it, and sometimes in the varsity game extra players are dressed who are not participating in the game, and they can do that for the coach sometimes. In a junior varsity game, all the players play. They are not supposed to be responsible for opening and closing the doors when the lines are being changed. An incident occurred where three players got off the ice and three players came on the ice, and the game was continuing. The door wasn't closed, and the player from Burrillville checked one of the West players into the open door. He wasn't hurt, but very well could have been seriously hurt. If the player went into the bench, the school department would be opening itself up to litigation. It would come back that this committee has

allowed this to take place. No one is questioning the personnel issue. The Committee has to deal with the personnel issues as they see fit. He further commented that the committee is missing the point. If they have a personnel issue with a coach, they need to deal with it. If removing that coach is for the well-being of the players, the committee should have done that. No one is questioning that.

Mr. Scherza stated that administration has responded many times. They have dealt with it responsibly. Any insinuation or innuendo that administration is not concerned with the health, well-being or safety of the students, people are way out of line in saying that. Administration has done it responsibly. They have talked with the adults involved

Page 18 December 18, 2006

along with legal counsel and human resources. To say that the investigation hasn't been done, a thorough investigation was done not only internally but also by the governing body which supersedes everything. Their investigation is official. He told the committee that there is a policy coming before the committee that will be discussed as an agenda item. It will be done the right way. This administration will at no time be bullied into making a decision out of urgency because someone doesn't like the way administration handled it. They will handle things in the best interest of children, pure and simple.

Mr. Sczerbinski stated that everyone knows what is going on. The committee needs to do their job, and their job is not worrying about one coach in this district they have an issue with. It is taking care of all these kids, and the committee is not doing that. He hoped there would be no incidents because proper supervision wasn't there.

Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Votto that because these incidents have been brought to light, what the liability is or responsibility of the School Committee if something should happen. Mr. Votto stated that he believed that administration has made a decision where they took into consideration not only the surrounding scope of the incidents that had taken place in the past but also at the same time they have looked into the ramifications it would have on the program. They do not believe at this particular point that they override what was decided as the ultimate decision. Mr. Lupino asked if it would be the prerogative of the new committee to bring something forward at a future meeting. Mr. Votto responded that the committee always has the prerogative to act on a resolution.

Mr. Archetto stated that at this time there is no policy for volunteer hockey coaches if there is no policy in place for them. Mr. Lupino responded that the committee does not have a written policy for volunteer coaches even though there are volunteers on every team. Mr. Scherza advised the committee that they are walking on very thin ice and advised this committee to think about what they were saying.

Everyone is aware of the revisions in the open meeting laws on which the committee can respond. They were getting dangerously close to a line they should not be stepping over. Mr. Lupino requested that as a result of this discussion the committee needs some kind of statement either absolving them from any further action as the result of any injuries that might happen in this situation or a legal opinion from the School Committee attorney that certain safety concerns have been mentioned by these parents and that there is some kind of position or a responsibility that absolves either the School Committee or the school district from anything that arises from this. He is still on this committee for another two weeks, and if something happens between now and the end of the year, he could get sued. The safety issues they brought up would make him want to have something in writing that said he was absolved from any responsibility for that situation. He didn't think it was an unreasonable request.

Page 19 December 18, 2006

Ms. Iannazzi stated that the request should be discussed in Executive Session. Mr. Lupino commented that an additional Executive Session would have to be called because there was none on this agenda for this evening. He is concerned about what happens between now and the next meeting.

XII. Announcement of Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Monday, January 1st, at 5:30 p.m. at Cranston West.

XIII. Adjournment

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer, and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned.

**There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at
8:22 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Anthony J. Lupino
Clerk**